

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1600

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

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LIMDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EG, UR, SY

SUBJ: SOVIET OFFICIAL ON GENEVA CONFERENCE AND ME SITUATION

REF: MOSCOW 8395

1. SUMMARY. DURING A CALL BY THE ACTING DCM ON JUNE 24, PYRLIN, ACTING CHIEF, NEAR EAST COUNTRIES DIVISION, MFA, INDICATED THAT THE SOVIETS DO NOT SEE THE RECONVENING OF A MEPC AS IMMINENT AND THAT "CAREFUL PREPARATIONS" FOR SUCH A CONFERENCE ARE STILL MANDATORY. PYRLIN STATED THAT SEPARATE AGREEMENTS NEGOTIATED BY ALL INTERESTED PARTIES WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF GENEVA ARE ACCEPTABLE TO THE SOVIET UNION, BUT CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT A NEW MEPC SHOULD NOT BE REGARDED AS SIMPLY AN "UM-

BRELLA" UNDER WHICH SEPARATE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WHICH IGNORE THE RIGHTS AND INTERESTS OF SOME PARTIES COULD BE CONCLUDED. HE CHIDED THE U.S. FOR ALLEGEDLY IGNORING THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE IN ITS RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH SADAT, RABIN, AND KHADDAM, AND HE EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE WHICH MOSCOW ATTACHES TO PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND TO A RESOLUTION OF THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM. PRYLIN VIEWED THE REST OF THE MIDDLE EAST AS RELATIVELY CALM AT THE MOMENT, AND HE HAD LITTLE TO OFFER ON EVENTS IN LEBANON OR ON PONOMAREV'S TRIP TO SYRIA. END SUMMARY.

2. GENEVA CONFERENCE. PRYLIN REITERATED MOSCOW'S POSITION THAT CAREFUL PREPARATIONS MUST PRECEDE ANY NEW MEPC, AND HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE KREMLIN IS IN NO GREAT RUSH TO CONVENE A POTENTIALLY UNSUCCESSFUL CONFERENCE. IN FACT, HE MENTIONED THAT IT MIGHT TAKE PLACE AFTER THE ARAB SUMMIT WHICH HE SAID NOW SEEMS SCHEDULED FOR NOVEMBER 8. HOWEVER, HE ALSO SAID THAT THE RECENT NY TIMES STORY ALLEGING THAT MOSCOW HAS SHELVED GENEVA IS "WITHOUT FOUNDATION." WHEN ASKED HOW HE VIEWED POSSIBLE NEW PARTIAL AGREEMENTS, PRYLIN STRESSED THAT THE USSR IS NOT AGAINST PARTIAL STEPS "PER SE." HOWEVER, PARTIAL AGREEMENTS ARE ACCEPTABLE ONLY AS LONG AS THEY ARE NEGOTIATED BY AND ARE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL THE INTERESTED PARTIES. HE REJECTED THE CONCEPT OF SEPARATE BILATERAL AGREEMENTS OUTSIDE THE GENEVA FRAMEWORK. HE ALSO WARNED AGAINST USING GENEVA AS AN "UMBRELLA" FOR NEGOTIATING BILATERAL AGREEMENTS WHICH DISREGARD THE INTERESTS OF SOME PARTIES.

3. PALESTINIANS. PRYLIN SAID THE SOVIET WERE "ASTONISHED" THAT THE QUESTION OF THE PALESTINIANS SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN IGNORED IN RECENT AMERICAN TALKS WITH SADAT, RABIN, AND KHADDAM. HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM IS THE CENTRAL ISSUE IN THE WHOLE CONFLICT AND IS A PROBLEM WHICH MUST BE SOLVED BEFORE ANY GENUINE SETTLEMENT CAN BE REACHED. HE STRESSED THAT THE QUESTION OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA IS THE MAJOR ROADBLOCK IN THE WAY OF A NEW MEPC. THE PALESTINIANS THEMSELVES HAVE NOT CONCLUDED HOW TO SETTLE THE ISSUE, AND THERE IS STILL NO AGREED ARAB POSITION. HOW-
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EVER, HE SAID, THERE SEEM TO BE FIVE POSSIBILITIES FOR PARTICIPATION: (1) AS A SEPARATE DELEGATION; (2) AS PART OF THE JORDANIAN DELEGATION; (3) AS PART OF THE SYRIAN DELEGATION; (4) AS PART OF AN ARAB LEAGUE DELEGATION; OR (5) AS PART OF AN "ALL ARAB" DELEGATION COMPOSED OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM ALL ARAB COUNTRIES. WHEN ASKED WHETHER SOVIET REFERENCE TO "PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION" AS DISTINGUISHED FROM "PLO PARTICIPATION" WAS SIGNIFICANT, PRYLIN SAID THE SOVIETS

BELIEVE THE FORMER IS "MORE FLEXIBLE." ASKED WHETHER THE PALESTINIANS PROPOSED TO ACCEPT ISRAEL, PYRLIN STRESSED THE NEED FOR REALISTIC VIEWPOINTS. HE LABELED THE ARAFAT IDEA OF A JEWISH-PALESTINIAN FEDERATION AS TOTALLY UNREALISTIC, YET SAID IT MIGHT PERHAPS SERVE AS A "STARTING POINT" FOR NEGOTIATIONS.

4. SYRIA. PYRLIN WELCOMED THE RECENT DECISION BY DAMASCUS TO EXTEND THE MANDATE OF THE UN FORCE. HE SAID THAT THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR IN SYRIA VIEWED THIS DECISION--MADE WITHOUT CREATING A CRISIS--AS MOTIVATED BY DAMASCUS' DIFFICULTIES WITH IRAQ. HOWEVER, PYRLIN DISAGREED WITH THIS ASSESSMENT AND CLAIMED THAT SYRIA'S ACTION WAS LARGELY A REFLECTION OF ITS GENUINE DESIRE TO PURSUE A CONSTRUCTIVE POLICY AIMED AT REACHING A JUST SETTLEMENT.

5. ASKED ABOUT PONOMAREV'S VIST TO DAMASCUS, PYRLIN SAID HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED ANY REPORTS ABOUT THE TALKS. PONOMAREV WAS ACCCOMPANIED TO DAMASCUS BY AMBASSADOR VINOGRADOV AND WOULD STOP IN BEIRUT ON THE WAY BACK TO MOSCOW, HE SAID. PYRLIN CLAIMED THAT PNOMAREV'S VISIT TO SYRIA WAS SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF SIGNING A ROUTING CPSU-B'AATH PARTY AGREEMENT COVERING THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES FOR 1975 AND 1976. HE DID NOT RESPOND TO QUESTIONING ON PONOMAREV'S MEETING WITH ARAFAT (REPORTED IN PRAVDA, JUNE 24).

6. LIBYA. WHEN ASKED ABOUT KOSYGIN'S RECENT TRIP TO LIBYA, PYRLIN SAID A MAJOR REASON FOR THE TRIP HAD BEEN TO MEET QADHAFI. HE CLAIMED THAT STORIES BEING SPREAD BY THE EGYPTIANS RE A MASSIVE ARMS DEAL WERE BASELESS. LIBYA'S SMALL POPULATION COULD NOT EFFECTIVELY USE A
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LARGE INFUSION OF MODERN WEAPONS. HOWEVER, THE LIBYANS HAD A GREAT DEAL OF MONEY AND WANTED ARMS, AND THE USSR AGREED TO SELL THEM MILITARY EQUIPMENT. BUT THE SIZE OF THE AGREEMENT WAS "ONLY NORMAL." ASKED ABOUT LIBYAN VIEWS ON THE ME, PYRLIN SAID THE SOVIE POSITION VIS A VIS A SETTLEMENT HAD BEEN "MADE CLEAR" TO THE LIBYANS.

7. IRAN-IRAQ. PYRLIN WAS NONCOMMittal WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS VIEWS ON THE RAPPROCHMENT BETWEEN BADHDAD AND TEHRAN. HE DID COMMENT, HOWEVER, THAT "THE DURDISH PROBLEM REMAINS A THREAT TO THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT." THE LARGE NUMBER OF REFUGEES STILL IN IRAN REPRESENT A SUBSTANTIAL POTENTIAL MILITARY FORCE. WHILE IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO KNOW WHETHER THIS SITUATION MAY LEAD TO RENEWED MILITARY ACTION, FOR THE PRESENT EVERYTHING

SEEMS TO BE QUIET, ACCORDING TO PYRLIN.

8. USSR-ISRAEL RELATIONS. WHEN IT WAS POINTED OUT THAT THE COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING THE VISIT OF CPI LEADER VILNER (REFTEL SEEMED TO MODIFY AND HARDEN MOSCOW'S REQUIREMENTS FOR THE NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS WITH JERUSALEM, PYRLIN REPLIED THAT "CONDITIONS DO NOT NOW EXIST WHICH WOULD PERMIT" RESUMPTION OF RELATIONS. ISRAEL, HE INSISTED, IS NOT DEMONSTRATING ANY GENUINE INTEREST IN REACHING A SETTLEMENT. TO PERMIT NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, PYRLIN SAID, THERE MUST BE A CESSATION OF THE "ANTI-SOVIET CAMPAIGN" BY ISRAEL AND ZIONIST CIRCLES AROUND THE WORLD AND GENUINE PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT.

9. CHINESE ACTIVITY IN MIDDLE EAST. PYRLIN CLAIMED THAT PEKING'S ROLE IN THE REGION HAD SIGNIFICANTLY DIMINISHED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS. WHEN PRODDED ABOUT SOUTH YEMEN, PYRLIN SAID THAT SOUTH YEMEN IS A VERY INTERESTING COUNTRY WITH VERY YOUNG LEADERS, AND THAT EVEN THERE THE CHINESE ROLE IS LESS THAN IT USED TO BE.

10. COMMENT: PYRLIN SEEMED UNUSUALLY RELAZED AND FRIENDLY. HE WILL BE GOING ON VACATION WHEN SYTENKO RETURNS FROM LEAVE THE BEGINNING OF JULY AND GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF BEING FAIRLY CONFIDENT THAT HIS VACATION WILL NOT BE INTERRUPTED BY THE FLARING UP OF

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